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ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) - New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson on Thursday urged New Mexicans to spend \$25 at each of two local stores this month, an initiative that could have a \$27 million economic impact on the state in December.

Richardson, who spoke at a restaurant in Albuquerque's NobHill shopping area, said that for every \$100 spent locally, \$68 stays in that community. That compares to \$43 remaining in the community for every \$100 spent in national chain stores, he said.

Because small- and medium-sized businesses are prevalent in New Mexico, shopping locally would help the state's budget shortfall, Richardson said.

"This is a way we can pump tax money, gross receipts funds, into our state and at the same time make a difference and help our local businesses," he said.

While Albuquerque, Santa Fe and cities around the country have asked shoppers to spend their dollars at local stores, New Mexico's "\$25 2 Main Street" campaign makes it one of few states - alongside Vermont and Utah - to offer a statewide push, said Stacy Mitchell, a senior researcher at the Institute for Local Self-Reliance.

"This is a growing movement. Now, it is on the minds of consumers in a way that we haven't seen in the 10 years that we've been following and tracking this stuff," Mitchell said. "More and more people are seeking out local businesses."

Since the first local shopping initiative in Boulder, Colo., was created in 1998, the movement has grown to about 130 groups urging local buying nationwide that represent about 30,000 independent businesses, Mitchell said.

The Institute for Local Self-Reliance conducted a survey of 1,100 independent business owners in January. It found that for November and December 2008, a period when all retail

sales had fallen about 10 percent nationally compared with the previous year, independent stores saw sales decrease 5.3 percent.

In communities with buy-local campaigns, independent stores saw sales fall only about 3 percent compared with the same time period a year earlier, Mitchell said.

Mitchell said though Santa Fe recently lost Locals Care, a nonprofit formed to encourage residents to shop locally, it still has Santa Fe Alliance, a national model for promoting independent businesses. Strong programs also are found in Bellingham, Wash., Portland, Maine, and Austin, Texas, she said.

In Arizona, Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon and U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell also recently urged residents to make a third of their holiday purchases in local stores.

Kimber Lanning, executive director of Local First Arizona, said consumers are starting to understand how their shopping habits affect their communities.

"People are starting to understand the connectivity; the simple math of buying it cheap is not cheap in the long run. We lose jobs and we're exporting wealth," Lanning said.